



## AUGUST NEWSLETTER

The Zero Waste Schools newsletter will help you get your school on a path toward generating zero waste through waste prevention, recycling, composting, and food recovery. You'll also find resources that connect zero waste to healthy eating, school gardens, and environmental education and action.

Feel free to share the newsletter with friends, colleagues, and students who are interested in zero waste.

[Sign up for ZWS news](#)

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### Zero waste school practices during COVID-19: A presentation/conversation with SGA & school leaders

Wednesday, September 2, 4-5:30 pm



Back-to-school is going to be different this year, and reopening plans continue to evolve. Zero waste efforts will need to pivot to meet the challenges we are facing.

Join Susan Casey and Becky Brodsky from SGA's Zero Waste Schools program and school leaders from around the region to exchange ideas and learn ways to creatively adapt zero waste practices to our new circumstances.

The conversation will center around reducing waste from the classroom and food service by adapting prevention, recycling, composting, and food recovery strategies. We'll also share ways students and families can learn how to reduce waste at home, including composting and single-use plastics reduction.

Click [HERE](#) to register.

This event is part of SGA's virtual series *Green Conversations: Connecting the Dots*.

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### SGA's film screening inspires action

In honor of Plastic Free July last month, SGA was excited to host a screening of the award-winning film **Microplastic Madness** followed by a panel discussion with the film's co-directors, **Debby Lee Cohen** and **Atsuko Quirk** from [Cafeteria Culture](#), and **Andrea Densham**, Conservation Policy Director



at the [Shedd Aquarium](#).

Our goal was to share the film's inspiring youth-focused message and to connect participants with ways to learn more about reducing single-use plastics and how to take action locally. Mission accomplished!

Over 80 households tuned in for the screening from across the Chicago metropolitan region and the country.

"Beautiful film. Uplifting and full of what we can do," remarked one viewer. Another commented, "As a former teacher, it was so inspiring. I have dreamt about bringing healthier and environmentally friendly habits into public schools."

Read more [HERE](#).

## Center for Green Schools COVID webcast series

Join the Center for Green Schools at USGBC for the following webinars to learn how school districts around the country are managing to keep sustainability efforts alive in the time of COVID.

[Green Cleaning in the Time of COVID](#)

Aug. 18, 2-3 pm CST

[Energy and IAQ in the Time of COVID](#)

Aug. 25, 2-3 pm CST

[Recycling and Composting in the Time of COVID](#)

Sept. 1, 2-3 pm CST

[Mental Health and Resiliency in the Time of COVID](#)

Sept. 15, 2-3 pm CST

[Pivoting Sustainability Programming in the Time of COVID](#)

Sept. 22, 2-3 pm CST



## Apply for a K-12 Leaders in Sustainability Fellowship from the Center for Green Schools

This yearlong [fellowship](#) provides existing early-career K-12 sustainability staff access to a peer-to-peer network, plus professional development, targeted education and technical support. Applications are open through August 28.

## eeGuidance for Reopening Schools: Environmental and outdoor education are key



The North American Environmental Educators Association and members of its Affiliate Network recently released [eeGuidance for Reopening Schools](#), a new publication that offers support for schools and districts as they find ways to safely and equitably reopen for students this fall.

Community-based environmental and outdoor education programs can be the key to equitably reopening schools by providing unique opportunities for learning and

contributing to both mental and physical well-being. The ideas in the guide present practical tools for schools and districts that will help create a more just and sustainable future for all.

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## Healthy green classrooms in a COVID-19 world

- Encourage hand-washing over sanitizer whenever possible.
- Promote the use of reusable water bottles.
- Follow [safe classroom cleaning protocols](#) and share this information with facilities staff.
- Eat lunch and [conduct class outdoors](#) as weather permits.
- Place a clearly labeled recycling bin next to the landfill bin for paper recycling. Use a separate recycling container with clear signage for lunchtime recyclables.
- Encourage students to bring home unopened non-perishable items leftover from lunch.
- Follow these [tips](#) to pack a waste free lunch from home.
- Remove clutter from classroom and leave air vents unobstructed.
- Let in natural daylight by opening the blinds and leaving windows uncovered.



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## Carton recycling grants – Apply now



The [Carton Council](#) is currently offering recycling grants of up to \$5,000 to help school districts start or expand their milk carton recycling programs. Funds can be used for equipment, education, and implementation support services. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

Recycling cartons can save schools money on disposal costs, reduces cafeteria waste, and helps students develop life-long recycling habits.

Contact your regional coordinator to request an application:

- Barbara Heineken (IL, MI, OH, IN, eastern U.S.): [bheineken@recycle.com](mailto:bheineken@recycle.com)
- Debra Dodson (MN, WI, western U.S.): [ddodson1@mac.com](mailto:ddodson1@mac.com)
- Michele Wagner (Rocky Mountain region, central southern U.S.): [micheleawagner@gmail.com](mailto:micheleawagner@gmail.com)

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## Tips that make it easy to reduce plastic consumption

The new reality of the pandemic does not mean that we need to give up our sustainable habits and resort to single-use plastics. We just may need to be a bit more thoughtful and creative in our approach.

- To avoid disposable bags at stores that won't allow reusables, put items back into your shopping cart and pack purchases in your reusable bags after you've left the store. This solution adds only a few minutes to your shopping trip and will set a great

example for others.

- Shopping your local farmer's market is a triple whammy. Buying local fresh fruits and vegetables is good for your health, supports local farms, and reduces the plastic packaging that comes with store-bought food.
- Advocate for restaurants to adopt an "Opt In" ordering process for single-use utensils, napkins, condiments, and straws using this [letter](#) as a guide.
- Instead of using plastic gloves when running errands, just wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after shopping.
- Continue to use your reusable water bottle. The COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking-water supplies.
- Learn more about reducing plastic pollution from these organizations: [The Story of Plastic](#), [Bahamas Plastic Movement](#), [Upstream](#), [Cafeteria Culture](#), [Plastic Pollution Coalition](#).



## EPA releases recommendations for recycling and sustainable management of food during COVID-19



These [recommendations](#) from the EPA share opportunities for individuals and organizations to prevent waste, increase reuse and recycling efforts, and to use food more efficiently at home, at school, and in the workplace.

## Remote learning resources

- [Virtual Sustainability Day Camp](#)
- [Virtual Learning Resources for Sustainability-Minded Educators](#)
- [Center for Green Schools Learning Lab](#)
- [Cafeteria Culture's Remote Learning Resources](#)
- [World Wildlife Fund's Food Waste Warrior Toolkit](#)
- [19 Great Science podcasts](#)
- [Curated distance resources for environmental education](#)

## Events



### [2020 Smith Nature Symposium](#)

**Aug. 13 – Oct. 2**

The Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods presents this five-part series of conversations to explore a more just and sustainable future in the aftermath of COVID-19. The series begins in August and culminates in an awards ceremony honoring Bill McKibben and Sue Halpern.



### [Microplastic Madness film screening](#)

**Aug. 24, 7 pm**

Join the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County for a free screening this award-winning film. It's an optimistic take on the plastic pollution crisis as told through a youth point of view. It will be followed by a live Q&A.

### [Go Green Illinois Schools Fall Meeting](#)

**Sep. date TBD**

The Environmental Educators Association of Illinois will share best



practices for reopening schools focusing on using outdoor spaces for healthy and engaged learning. Project Learning Tree K-8 resources will be shared. Registration will be available on the GGILS website.



### Sky Day

**Sep. 20 or any time**

A day to take positive action in your community by taking and posting photos of the sky. It's about coming together to protect the sky and is a great way to make your voice heard.



### GreenTown: Climate Crisis

**Sep. 23 & 30**

Co-produced by SGA and a5, this virtual event includes breakout sessions, plenary presentations, pre-event film screenings, and panel discussions centered around the connection between climate solutions and equity with a focus on Cook County.

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